



# Small Grants Make a Big Difference

*The Forest Service and Alaska Department of Community and Economic Development have teamed up on a small grant program designed to help improve the quality of life of Alaska's rural residents.*

In 1998 and 1999, 31 small communities in Alaska received Rural Development "mini" grants ranging from \$7,500 to \$30,000 to help pay for economic development efforts such as facilities, planning and business start-ups. Rural Development is a program that provides matching funds for local projects that help stimulate improvements in the economic or social well being of rural citizens. The grants came from the Alaska Department of Community

**"THE BUSINESSES  
CREATED THROUGH  
THESE EFFORTS  
WILL GENERATE THE  
KIND OF JOBS THAT  
LOCAL PEOPLE NEED  
TO HELP THEM AND  
THEIR FAMILIES  
PROSPER IN THEIR  
OWN COMMUNITY."**

and Economic Development (DCED) and the U.S. Forest Service, Alaska Region who, not long ago, teamed up in an effort to make the Rural Development Grant program easier and more efficient for Alaska communities. By combining funds and administration of the program the two agencies are able to stretch the available

dollars. The combined programs also mean one less grant application for interested communities to fill out.

In this "mini-grant" program approximately \$200,000 a year is awarded to rural Alaskan commu-

nities, in amounts up to \$30,000. The 12 winning projects in 1998, chosen from a field of 42 applicants, included a park upgrade, hotel renovation, development plans and feasibility studies, arts and crafts marketing, campground, start-up funding for a new business, and support for technology training. The grants were nearly evenly matched by the recipients, bringing the total in project funding to just over \$446,000.

In 1999 the 19 grant recipients were selected from 26 applications and the money again went mostly toward business, infrastructure and planning or feasibility studies (see chart on back).

### Funded Ideas Lead to Jobs

DCED Commissioner Deborah Sedwick said she was "delighted with the diversity and creativity of these locally conceived economic development projects. The businesses created through these efforts will generate the kind of jobs that local people need to help them and their families prosper in their own community."

One of the communities that received a grant in 1998 felt the funded project would end up creating 5 permanent jobs for local residents. Another commented that the funding prevented shutdown of a working fish processing plant in their area.

### Investment in Business Allows Use of Local Timber

In Wrangell, a city of approximately 2500 people in Southeast Alaska, a \$23,500 mini grant helped WhiteWoods, a local business that specializes in wood products from boards to custom finished pieces. The grant, matched more than 2-1 by the City and WhiteWoods, paid for materials and labor to convert some existing equipment into kilns for drying the wood used by the business. With the kilns, WhiteWoods can use locally harvested wood as the raw material for furniture, siding, home building, boat construction and repair, and arts and crafts projects. In the end, more local jobs will be created.

### Successful Company Started with Mini-Grant

A few years ago a mini-grant of \$25,000 was given to a resident of remote Kodiak Island to help develop an idea for houseplant fertil-

izer packed in teabags. The money allowed her to develop the formula for her natural ingredient based PlanTea, find a manufacturer to package it in teabags, and then have the new product tested and verified as being as good or better than chemical fertilizers. The mix of kelp, greensand, rock phosphate, fish bonemeal, dried vegetables and herbs proved up and soon after Plantamins, Inc. was started with \$80,000 in private investments. Now the product is available by mail order, on the internet and in retail stores in more than 20 states.

### Both the Grants and the Partnership are a Success

The small grants alone are an important aid to Alaskan communities and villages looking for ways to grow economically. The partnership between the Forest Service and the Department of Community and Economic Development helps make the program even more of a success.

### Partners in this Project

- ♦ Alaska Department of Community and Economic Development (formerly the Department of Community and Regional Affairs)
- ♦ U.S. Forest Service, Alaska Region, State & Private Forestry

### To Find Out More

Steve Bush  
Rural Community and  
Landowner Assistance  
Program Leader

USDA Forest Service  
State & Private Forestry  
3301 C Street, Suite 522  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
907-743-9451

## 1999 RURAL DEVELOPMENT MINI-GRANTS IN ALASKA

COMMUNITY	PROJECT	GRANT
Ambler	Road & Dump Improvements & Equipment	\$19,000
Anderson	Road Construction & Campsite Improvements	\$15,000
Barrow	Bowling Alley Feasibility Study	\$14,500
Circle	Sawmill Operation	\$30,000
Coffman Cove	Dry Kiln Purchase	\$20,500
Houston	Septage Site Feasibility Study	\$15,000
Interior Rivers Resource Conservation & Development District	Regional Training Center Planning	\$14,300
Kake	Cottage Industry Business Plan	\$10,000
Kotzebue	Fish Processing Plant Business Plan	\$27,100
McGrath	Water System Repair	\$13,100
Naukati	Build Public Boat Launch Ramp	\$28,350
Pelican	Harbor Revitalization Engineering Plan	\$20,000
Pilot Point	Road Feasibility Study	\$10,000
Southeast Alaska	Shellfish Nursery Development	\$30,000
St. Mary's	Community Economic Development Strategy	\$15,000
Thorne Bay	Industrial Site Port Design/Survey/Appraisal	\$30,000
Togiak	5 Overall Economic Development Programs	\$15,000
Valdez	Dried Fish Processing Plant Planning	\$10,000
Whittier	Marine Engineering & Dock Survey	\$20,000
TOTAL		\$356,850